

October 11, 2000

West Nile Virus Found in Crow

By PAULA MAXWELL

Board of Health Agent Jennifer Joyal reported Tuesday that the first confirmed appearance of West Nile Virus has turned up in a dead crow found on King Phillips Path last Monday, October 2.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health notified the Duxbury Board of Health of the positive results on the

infected American Crow on Friday, October 6.

Joyal said that due to the lateness of the season, cooling temperatures and the absence of any mosquitoes found to be carrying the virus, people should not become overly alarmed.

"We don't intend to spray for mosquitoes. It's too late in the season," said Joyal.

She said that although the virus has surfaced all over the state, particularly in the Boston area, there have been no human cases detected.

Friday's announcement marked the 344th bird in the state that has tested positive since the first sign of the virus surfaced on July 27th in Jamaica

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Plain. Among the South Shore area locations where WNV infected birds have been identified are: Braintree, Cohasset, Plympton, Middleboro, Weymouth, Hull, and Randolph.

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a rare form of encephalitis caused by a virus spread by adult mosquitoes of the *Culex* species. WNV grows in birds and is transmitted from bird to bird and from birds to humans by mosquitoes. Horses bitten by infected mosquitoes can also become sick. Mild symptoms of the infection include fever, headache, and body aches often with skin rash and swollen lymph glands. More severe infections can cause headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors and sometimes death. The first reported incidence of the virus in humans occurred in New York City in 1999.

Board of Health officials reported there is no treatment for WNV but doctors can treat the symptoms of WNV encephalitis. The risk of getting WNV is the highest from late July through September.

Joyal said that people should take precautions to minimize exposure to mosquitoes at all times and eliminate potential mosquito breeding areas in standing water around homes and businesses.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) has had a long standing program to look for another virus carried by mosquitoes called Eastern Equine Encephalitis. Every year from May until first frost MPDH field staff collect mosquitoes and bring them to the state laboratory for testing. This year MDPH has expanded this surveillance program to look for WNV throughout the state.

Officials at MDPH said that they have been accepting dead

crows for testing with certain criteria including that: the bird has not been dead for more than 24 hours; that there is no signs of maggots or flies; visible eyes; no suggestion of physical trauma as cause of death; has not been refrigerated for more than three days and not been frozen.

Mosquito trapping continued at 16 regular long term sites including Plymouth County throughout the summer and early fall. MDPH receives and tests mosquitoes collected by Mosquito Control Districts in many towns.

Animal Control Officer Halley Dee Parlin said that a dead crow found in Duxbury September 8th was turned over to state officials for testing but did not apparently have the virus.

For more information contact the Duxbury Board of Health on 934-1105 or the Mass. Dept. of Public Health on 1-877-603-3572 or visit the MDPH web site at www.state.ma.us/dph for weekly updated information.